THE FRY ART GALLERY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2021

A reminder that the Gallery exhibition season ends on Sunday October 31st.

There are two exhibitions sharing the main room. *Lithographic Fever* looks at the period from the end of the Second World War until the 1960s during which time lithographs became a fashionable way to make prints. Notably among the leaders in this field were some associated with Great Bardfield, and they feature in this wider review, which has also called upon work in the Arts Council Collection and the Government Art Collection.

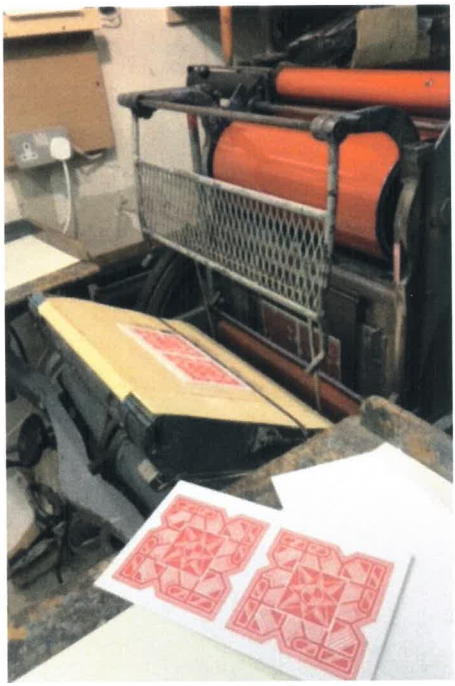
A Singular Obsession commemorates the centenary of Michael Ayrton's birth and is centred around the myth of the minotaur, a subject which obsessed the artist. It includes over a dozen bronze sculptures, many on show for the first time. The exhibition has been greatly helped by Dr Justine Hopkins, step grand-daughter to Ayrton, whose book *Michael Ayrton: Ideas Images Reflections*, we have on sale, (£33.50 inc. postage) and who gave a much appreciated lecture in Saffron Walden last month. A video made by Dr Hopkins (*A Singular Obsession – Michael Ayrton Centenary Celebration*) is available on our website, or on YouTube at ***www.youtube.com/watch?v=lNtidLwt2RI***

The Gallery, temporarily located in the Museum grounds, is open on Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 2pm to 5pm and on Saturday from 11am to 5pm, until the end of October. There is no need for prior booking.

The Annual Exhibition and Sale

The Annual Sale will be held this year on Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st November 12 noon to 4pm both days. Our ever-popular exhibition and sale returns following a hiatus in 2020 due to the pandemic, and will be held at our temporary home at the Fry Art Gallery Too, 9b Museum Street, Saffron Walden. As in previous years, Fry Art Gallery members receive with this mailing an invitation to the Private View, which will be held from 11am until 12 noon on Saturday 20th. As always this gives members the very worthwhile opportunity to have first choice and a chance to snap-up an original artwork ahead of the general public.

This year Hugh Ribbans has designed a beautiful hand-printed Private View card, which is a work of art in its own right. We hope you will enjoy displaying it and that it will entice you to come along and support us. Framed and unframed works will be available to purchase, in person only as we are currently unable to deal with postal sales. On offer will be works by artists such as Maggi Hambling, John Lawrence, John Aldridge, Michael Rothenstein, Edward Bawden, Richard Bawden, Hannah Firmin, Mark Hearld, and Tessa Newcomb, as well as by newer names such as Ian Archie Beck, Simon Carter, Philip Lyons, David Cass, and John Webb. After an unpredictable and challenging year, we are very much looking forward to the event, which is already gathering a great deal of interest. The Sale is dependent upon the continued relaxation of Covid 19 restrictions.



Ed of the Hellbox Foundry Press printing the Sale Private View invitation.
(A "hellbox" is a receptacle where pieces of cast metal type are thrown after printing. The job of sorting the type from the hellbox and putting it back into the job case was given to the apprentice, known as a "printer's devil".)

The Enlarged Gallery

Work is steadily under way, and is scheduled for completion by the end of January next year. Until that time we cannot be precise about our re-opening, but the target date is currently our usual day, the first Sunday in April. Full details will be in the March Newsletter. Building work began despite a shortfall in the sum actually raised to pay for it, but it is heartening to report that a further £5,650 has since been given by fourteen individuals and two charitable trusts. This means that currently only £37,500 will be needed from the ten members who offered four years of interest free loans in order that work might commence. The Appeal remains open, and we would be delighted to open next year totally debt-free.

New Chairman

The Committee have elected Sir Roderick Newton, who became a Trustee last year, to become Chairman at the AGM in 2022 in succession to Gordon Cummings.

The Hon. Mr Justice Newton was appointed to the High Court in 2014 and since 2016 has been the Senior Family Judge for East Anglia.

2022 Programme

While tempting Providence, Covid, the weather and any other exigency you care to name, it is planned to celebrate the re-opening with an exhibition drawn entirely from the Permanent Collection. *Regeneration* will include highlights from the 3,300 items now in the Collection, displayed in the expanded gallery space, along with artefacts and other items that have not necessarily been seen before. Work by Bawden and Ravilious that have been absent this year will return.

The smaller gallery (the Gibson Room) will contain a special exhibition of work by Isabel Rawsthorne (who also exhibited as Isabel Lambert) to reflect the extraordinary life of this artist who was also muse to Picasso, Giacometti, Epstein and Bacon, and widowed by two composers, Constant Lambert and Alan Rawsthorne.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting held on September 3rd was conducted by the acting Chairman Gordon Cummings and adopted the Annual Report and Accounts for the year 2020. The four Trustees, (Jennifer Cummings, Lesley Nolan. Philip Neale and John Ready), whose reappointment was required were confirmed. The meeting concluded with a stimulating talk by Alan Powers, reflecting on the history of the Gallery and how the artists represented are now viewed. The Annual Report and Accounts can be downloaded from our website, ***fryartgallery.org*** . Go to "Trustees" in the banner at the top of the first page, and scroll down.

Winter lectures

Uncertainty about the availability of our usual venue until recently caused the abandonment of our usual Autumn Lecture programme.

Can you help?

The lifeline of the Society, which is greatly admired, is the entirely voluntary nature of our activities. We are now in need of help in various ways, and if you are able to offer your services please make contact as indicted.

Invigilators

One of the most rewarding ways of helping is to join the group who man the Gallery at opening times, and whose presence is so often favourably remarked upon by our visitors. No special knowledge or expertise is expected, and training is given about the procedures followed, as well as briefing on the particular exhibitions. Invigilators are asked to cover up to six or seven sessions each year. Please contact Jennifer Cummings at ***jcummings@fryartgallery.org*** if you would like to join next year.

Independent Examiner of Accounts

Martin Gruselle, Treasurer, is hoping to find someone who would take over the *pro bono* role from Nick Caton who has served us so well over the past five years. While a professional qualification is desirable this is a task that can be done from afar. Martin is contactable on 01763 838494.

Treasurer

Martin is equally interested in finding a member to whom he could hand over the role of Treasurer at some appropriate time in the future.

Art UK website

Art UK are constructing a website that will make available all artworks that are in public ownership in the UK. They have previously done a magnificent job with oils, gouaches and acrylics and now wish to extend to all works on paper. This is a wonderful opportunity to boast our extensive collection, particularly of Bawden and Ravilious, alongside the many others. Listing entries is relatively simple, but does require modest computer skills. It can be done at home, and if you would like to help please contact Gordon Cummings on 01223 892108 or email gcummings@fryartgallery.org.

Legacies

All members are encouraged to bear the Society in mind when putting their affairs in order. It is always nice if we know and can thank you in advance, but we have been pleasantly surprised by recent legacies. The latest, just as we go to press, is from a member who lived in Switzerland, which has tested our ingenuity as it is in Swiss German.

On-line Shop

This is accessed via ***fryartgallery org.*** and is gathering customers for our deliberately small range of relevant items stocked in books, tea towels and the new Ravilious design for a child's handkerchief, which is only available direct from us, and so will make an extra special Christmas gift.

Also on the same address line is the Picture of the Week series which will go some way to keeping you in touch with the Collection.

Hugh Belsey Lecture Series

Hugh Belsey is to give a series of illustrated talks at The Friends Meeting House in Saffron Walden entitled ***An Exploration of Portrait Painting: 'I don't want justice, I want mercy'***. The course of twelve lectures runs from 25th January to 3rd May 2022. They are held on a Tuesday afternoon at 2.15pm.

The quotation above is attributed to Billy Hughes, the distinguished early twentieth-century Prime Minister of Australia. Justice is perhaps something we want for others and mercy something we want for ourselves, a dichotomy that highlights the inherent difficulties in painting portraits. Every portrait has as much to do with the patron, as it does with the portraitist.

The focus of our investigations will centre on late eighteenth-century British portraiture, a period and place when and where there were more portraits painted than at any other time and anywhere else in the world. The work of a portraitist was busy, competitive, repetitive and unrepenting. It required remarkable personal and organisational abilities, management skills to run a studio, or, as an alternative, the process required artistic agility and speedy production. The reasons for commissioning portraits were many and varied, relationships such as a record of marriage, a father losing a daughter, for publicity purposes, praising corporate and individual strength, claiming the virtues of fidelity and motherhood, recognising dynastic inheritance and

attempting immortality. Historic portraits provide a unique insight into a great variety of attitudes and the evolving manners of a changing society.
Further information will be available at the end of October. Pick up a leaflet at the Meeting House or the Information Centre in the Market Square, visit www.hughbelsey.co.uk or email ***hugh.belsey1@gmail.com***. I look forward to seeing you early next year.

Hugh Belsey

Acquisitions

Purchasing has been at a low level apart from the Gillian Lowndes *Mug Sculpture* which was described in the last Newsletter, and the purchase of a watercolour by John Aldridge in 1936 of Great Bardfield Fair. We have however been the recipient of two generous collections of books either illustrated by, or about, Bawden and Ravilious, which have ben presented by Susanne Forrest and Christine McMullen.

The Aldridge watercolour of a Bardfield feature has been complemented by the donation by Robyn Cantus of *Before and after Great Bardfield*. This is the autobiography by Lucie Aldridge that he has unearthed and, along with his additional chapters, has just been published. (Inexpensive Progress Ltd. 2021)

John Aldridge RA, ***Great Bardfield Fair***, watercolour 1936

Some members have been disappoonted that we have been unable to show some of our more iconic Ravilious watercolours this season, so here is ***Iron Bridge at Ewenbridge.***

In her autobiography ***Long Live Great Bardfield,*** **Tirzah Ravilious wrote:**

After lunch I went up to rest on my bed and Evelyn (Hepher) followed me upstairs presently and said; 'Poor Tirzah, there's more bad luck, Eric is missing now', and she handed me a telegram from the Admiralty. I said: 'I'm not going to believe it', and I got up and she went for a walk with me to the iron bridge. It was a lovely day and when we got back to the house, I said: 'My headache is gone at any rate', and she laughed and said: Good for you, Tirzah.'

As we go to press on 4th October work continues on the new building with pouring a new concrete slab. The worker on the left is standing in what used to be the Bawden Room.

Don't forget that you can follow our news on Facebook and Twitter, as well as our blog at *fryartgallery.blog*

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